

Rock Outcrop Management Project

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Project Overview

Introduction

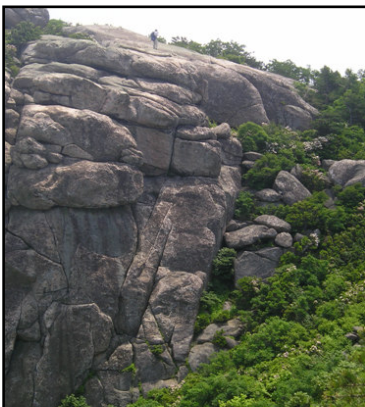
The rock outcrops of Shenandoah National Park are some of the largest in the region and contain numerous significant vegetation communities and rare plant and animal populations (Ludwig et al., 1993). The Rock Outcrop Management Project taking place from 2005 to 2007 is funding natural resource and recreation use assessments that will culminate in the preparation and implementation of a rock outcrop management plan to mitigate current impacts, accommodate visitor use, and direct the future management of fragile rock outcrop areas.



Quartzite boulder field at Blackrock south

Eric Butler

Management Concerns



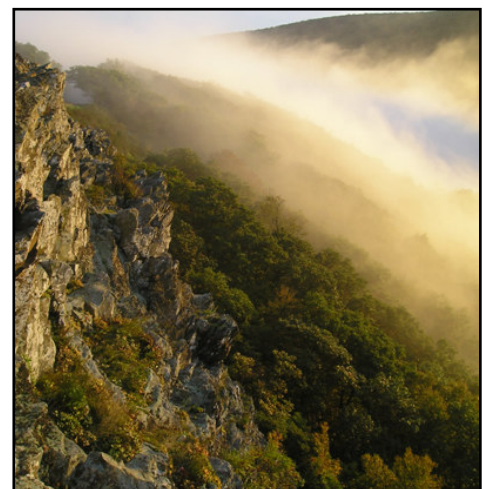
Eric Butler

The Park must protect cliff resources while still providing opportunities for visitor enjoyment of those resources (SNP, 2003). Important information about factors such as location, resource characteristics, and visitor use impacts necessary to make decisions about rock outcrop management is seriously lacking. Intense use of certain areas by hiking, climbing, and camping enthusiasts has led to degradation of vegetation and soils at some cliff and rock outcrop sites, including impacts to rare species and communities (Hilke, 2002).

Granite cliffs on Old Rag mountain

Project Description

The Rock Outcrop Management Project is a comprehensive three-year effort from 2005 to 2007 to address the challenges facing rock outcrop areas in the Park. Fifty rock outcrop study sites have been chosen for inclusion in the project. Sites range from extremely popular areas such as the summit of Old Rag and Hawksbill mountains, to much-less-traveled areas such as Halfmile Cliff and Sawlog Ridge.



Sunset on the greenstone
cliffs of Crescent Rocks

Eric Butler



Park visitors enjoying the view from Stonyman Mountain
Jens Hilke

The project is funding surveys to assess biological and geological resources, visitor impact, and visitor use. The project will culminate in the development and implementation of a Rock Outcrop Management Plan. This plan will direct mitigation and monitoring, and provide for visitor use at rock outcrop sites. Shenandoah is working with several partners on this project including Virginia Tech, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the United States Geological Survey.

Year one (2005) of the project was devoted to gathering information on the location, characteristics, and recreation uses of rock outcrop resources. Year two (2006) focuses on the completion of three projects with our study partners, outreach efforts, and synthesis of information into a Rock Outcrop Management Plan. Year three (2007) includes finalization of the Rock Outcrop Management Plan and the completion of the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) and public review process, coupled with continued outreach and plan implementation activities.

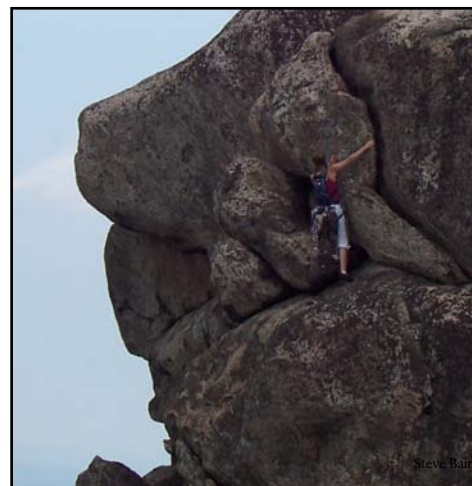
Details on the Rock Outcrop Management Project are available by going to www.nps.gov/shen then clicking on "Management Documents."

References

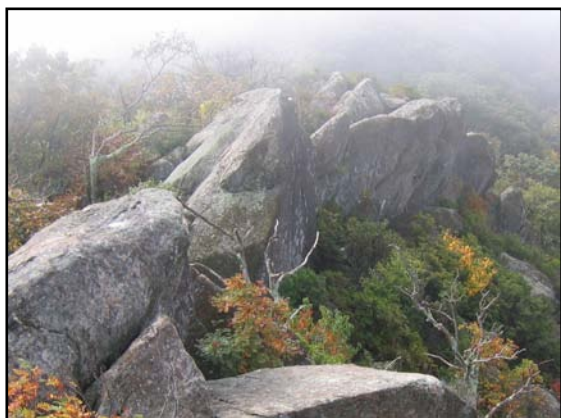
Hilke, J. C. 2002. Management considerations for rock outcrop barren communities on three peaks in Shenandoah National Park. Master's Degree Research Project. University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont.

Ludwig, J. C., G. P. Fleming, C. A. Pague, T. J. Rawinski 1993. A Natural Heritage Inventory of Mid-Atlantic Region National Parks in Virginia: Shenandoah National Park. Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Natural Heritage Technical Report #93- 5.

Shenandoah National Park 2003. Strategic Management Plan - Shenandoah National Park. Internal NPS Document.



A park visitor rock climbing on Old Rag Mountain
Steve Bair



Old Rag Mountain

Eric Butler

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